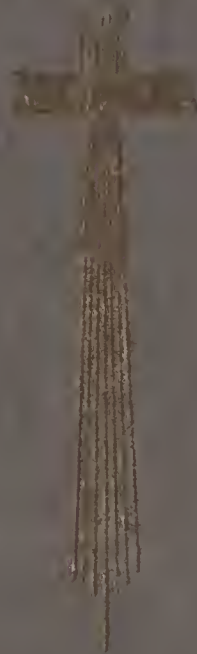


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HE KNEW  
WHAT WAS  
IN MAN



WILLIAM  
LOWE  
BRYAN



Class \_\_\_\_\_

Book \_\_\_\_\_

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# HE KNEW WHAT WAS IN MAN

By WILLIAM LOWE BRYAN

TO THE CLASS OF 1906  
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W I S H    t o  
preach a short  
sermon on the  
t e x t    “ H e  
knew what was in man.”

In all that you have  
learned within or without  
the schools, there is nothing  
more important than what  
you know or believe you  
know about human nature.





You have been told many conflicting things. You have been told that men are on the whole very good, that they are friendly, generous, trustworthy, and that the joy of life lies in friendship and in coöperation with your fellows. You have been told that where men do fall short of what they should be, they are teachable, that they can be reached and touched and

changed and made right,  
and that the highest and  
happiest life-work is in  
some way to make men bet-  
ter, and then to live and die  
compassed about by their  
gratitude.

On the other hand, you  
have heard an entirely dif-  
ferent story. You have  
heard from many high  
sources that life is essential-

ly tragic, that under all the shows of civilization and religion, life is war, as relentless as ever it was in the jungle, and that the hope of making society really better is forever an illusion. The honorable Brutus, it is said, the noblest Roman of them all, is never able to regenerate Rome. He comes at last to his Philippi and is slain by the corrupt society which he has sought to

save. The generous Timon, they say, who lavishes his wealth upon those about him, always finds himself forsaken in his adversity, and can only turn upon mankind with rage and curses. Prince Hamlet, we are told, finds always that the state of Denmark is rotten and can only cry, "How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable seem to me all the uses of this world!" Ac-

According to this tragic view of life, Moses, the nation-maker, who leads the people out of Egypt through the desert toward the Holy Land, is always stricken with despair, not by his enemies but by the perversity and treachery of his own people, and is always forced to cry to God, as Moses did, for death as an escape from his intolerable burden.



Now, in hearing and weighing these and other conflicting views as to what the truth is about human nature, it is surely worth while to hear and to weigh the view of Him of whom it was said, "He knew what was in man." What did He see in us?

For one thing He saw the evil. No man-hater ever

saw it blacker. He knew that there is in man lust and murder and treachery and a covering of hypocrisy. He knew no philosophy with which to take these things lightly. They were to Him infinitely more dreadful than the lash or the crown of thorns. The worst of them was disloyalty—the disloyalty of His friends. “He came unto His own, and His own received

Him not." He wept over Jerusalem and said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" He was betrayed by one of the Twelve for money. On the last night they all forsook Him and

fled. And one of them, that night, three times denied that he knew his Master.

If ever a man was justified in turning with tragic hopelessness away from the human race, it was Jesus of Nazareth.

Why did He not give us up? The answer is, because He knew what was in man. Because underneath the man of lust and murder

and treachery, He saw another man who can not be given up. He knew the passion of the Prodigal, the passion which led him from his father's house into every iniquity; but He also knew that in the Prodigal there was a deeper passion which, if awakened, would lead him from among the swine back to the life where he belonged. He knew the disloyal cowardice of Peter.

But He knew that below the cowardice and disloyalty there was a Peter who would stand like a rock in a storm. He looked out from His Cross upon a jeering multitude, symbol of the vaster multitude who forever jeer and crucify the good, and there He performed His supreme miracle. He believed in them. He saw what was in them. He saw through the



darkness and through the whirlwind of evil passion the real multitude, whose deepest law, whose deepest necessity, is that they shall be loyal to each other and to their Father in Heaven.

My children, believe this man. Life is tragic as He saw. Life is terrible as you will know. You may fight as the tigers do until your

turn comes to perish. You may curse with Timon. You may despair with Hamlet. Or, with Jesus of Nazareth, you may find a place within, where there are neither curses nor despair nor war, but where there lives an unconquerable courage for every circumstance and for every task which can come to you before the going down of the sun.





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